



# U.S. EMBASSY DUSHANBE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

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## FLEX Alumni Say Good-Bye to Cultural Affairs Officer Anne Benjaminson



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## Embassy Upcoming Events

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August 16, 2009

“Youth Enrichment Camps – A Leadership Opportunity for FLEX Alumni. Presented by American Camp Counselors Middy Tilghman and Andrew McEwan.

Location: 86 Tolstoy Street, ACCELS Office

Time: 16:00 p.m.

## US Tour Initiates Child's Rights Centre



*Hairiniso Elmurodova, alumnus of the USAID Community Connections program, at the office discussing her new project for Construction of the Child Centre. Photo: ACCELS*

“I wanted to create a place where children would receive the support they need.”

Two years ago, Hairiniso Elmurodova would never have dreamed of being director of a child's rights center focusing on the support of orphaned, disabled, and impoverished children from families of Tajikistan's Bokhtar district. A former trainer for a public association promoting rights of women in Bokhtar, she decided to open a Center for Children after her USAID supported trip to United States.

Hairiniso's center is a prototype of the American resource center for children that

she visited in Iowa while on the USAID Community Connections program for Women Leaders. “I thought it will be great to have something like that center in Tajikistan. I wanted to create a place where children would receive the support they need.” After her return, Hairiniso began working intensively to bring her ideas into reality, and she founded the Shodi (“happiness”) organization. Currently, the center provides various services to children who are in need of medical, psychological, recreational, and professional skill development. The center also works to raise awareness in the general population of childrens' issues.

Moreover, Hairiniso achieved what few local NGO leaders can; she obtained land from local authorities to build a new center to accommodate the increasing needs of the Bokhtar children who enjoy its services. Now her organization is in possession of the land and waiting for the construction of a new building.

“We need to work with marginalized children to arrive at a point where they feel cared for by the community; currently, many of the children who visit our centre feel they can benefit society by selling their handicrafts and enjoy what the community of Bokhtar and other international organizations have to offer.” With this in mind, Hairiniso continues to actively engage with the community and with other organizations that provide support to children. She is currently seeking support to construct a new building for the center.



## Access Students Engage and Charm Ambassador Jacobson



On June 25, 2009 40 Access Microscholarship students and four teachers met Ambassador Jacobson in the Information Resource Center to talk about USG exchange programs for students and the Ambassador's career.

Ambassador Jacobson spent 45 minutes with Access Micro-scholarship students and teachers from the Operation Mercy organization. The Ambassador conducted the exchanges in English, Russian, and Tajik, which delighted the students and put them at ease. They asked about the Ambassador's career, the life of a diplomat, and how they could get to the U.S. to study. This was the junior-high age students' first visit to the embassy. They had a wonderful conversation with the Ambassador and all participants were left with a very positive impression. Although they had completed only one year of after-school English study, they introduced themselves and conducted most of the discussion in English. The IRC Coordinator made a brief introduction on the use of the IRC and distributed to them IIP publications like: the Education in U.S., the brochure on the President Barak Obama, a brochure on "Being Muslim in America", English Teaching Forum journal, U.S. A. map with facts in brief and Info U.S. CDs.

## Brenda Flanagan, Author, Civil Rights Advocate

Brenda Flanagan, a professor of English and award winning writer from North Carolina, performed her short stories for audiences in Dushanbe, Khujand, and Qurghon-Teppa. The cultural event helped reach a broad Tajik audience from academia, media, business and cultural circles, high school and university students. Through stories about Flanagan's unique life history and empathy with the poor and elderly, Flanagan inspired members of the audience to volunteer for civil society activities to help the disadvantaged.



Flanagan spoke about the evolution of civil rights in the United States, highlighting significant events that led to improvements in equal rights for Black Americans, such as Brown vs. the Board of Education, Septima Clark's literacy campaigns to ensure Blacks could vote, and Collette Colvin refusing to relinquish her seat in the front of the bus. She spoke about how the election of President Obama was made possible by sacrifices and struggles of these and other civil rights advocates. She urged the audiences to continue the struggle against “institutionalized racism” that still affects U.S. citizens today. Sharing the pain of prejudice sometimes brought tears to her eyes, as when she spoke of Emmett Till, murdered on suspicion of whistling at a white woman, or when she herself was shot at after moving into a white neighborhood in Texarkana.

Flanagan emphasized that fair and democratic government is an ongoing process and civil rights in the U.S. will continue, even after the election of an African American president. She communicated a crucial message to inspire civil leaders in Tajikistan to advocate for rights codified in law, but not defended in practice.

Brenda Flanagan also met with UGS programs alumni at the “Pamir” restaurant. Alumni were asking a lot of questions about Flanagan’s published collection of short stories, “In Praise of Island Women and Other Crimes.”

## The U.S. Embassy Presents David Korevaar, Pianist



After being introduced by Ambassador Tracey Jacobson, Boulder, Colorado-based pianist David Korevaar performed for a capacity crowd at the Kamoli Khujandi Theater in Khujand. His repertoire included American works, as well as pieces by Tajik composers Zaydullo and Tolib Shahidi. Following the concert, Korevaar signed autographs and took pictures with fans. This activity promoted American music and culture in a remote region of Tajikistan that rarely welcomes foreign visitors.

Cultural Envoy David Korevaar performed before a packed house at the Tajik Conservatory. Korevaar's performance was part of the International Piano Festival, which featured pianists from Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and the United States. At his solo concert, Korevaar played pieces by Aaron Copland and Franz Liszt, as well as compositions by Tajik composers Ziyodullo and Tolib Shahidi. The pianist talked about music and American culture with visitors to the Dushanbe American Corner.

Korevaar held master classes in five music schools and conservatories in Dushanbe and Khujand. Students played pieces for him so that he could assess their techniques and skills.



At Dushanbe's American Corner, Korevaar discusses music and American culture with patrons. During his 10-day visit to Tajikistan, Korevaar gave concerts in Dushanbe and Khujand, and taught master classes in five music schools and conservatories in Dushanbe and Khujand. This was Korevaar's second Tajik sojourn; he first visited Tajikistan in April 2008.



## **USG and Soros Alumni Discuss Economic Crisis with President Rahmon's Senior Economic Advisors**

Nematjon Buriev and Farrukh Hamraliev, senior adviser to President Rahmon, briefed USG and Soros alumni working in the economic and financial sectors on Government of Tajikistan efforts to mitigate the crisis in Tajikistan at a roundtable discussion June 23, 2009.

The government economic policy experts and alumni with global perspectives and expertise shared their assessments of the scope and duration of the global economic crisis on Tajikistan's fragile economy. The advisors expressed appreciation for the experience of the alumni. The roundtable helped forge relationships between people with knowledge that can affect the country's economic future.



## **Community Connections Alumni Launch Association and Programs after Return from U.S.**

Alumni of a Community Connection Loan Management June 2009 program in Bluefield, West Virginia returned and developed the program "Educational Training for Girls in Istaravshan."

The main aim of this program is to increase opportunities for 12 girls from Istravshan to pursue higher education by preparing them for graduate study through additional to school training in English and leadership. The long term goal of the program is to encourage target girls to become leaders in their communities.

The training for girls aims at promoting volunteerism among CC alumni by their active participation in the program as invited speakers and monitors of the program implementation; but also aims at transferring the attitude to beneficiaries of the program to develop a volunteering concept in local communities.

Loan management alumni had a chance to participate in volunteer activities and learn the concept of volunteerism in the United States. Participants observed how Americans contribute to their communities and help shape the society they live in. On return to Tajikistan, the alumni also founded the Community Connections Alumni Association, a nongovernmental organization through which they plan to implement various activities whose ultimate goal is to benefit the local communities they represent. Irrespective of a wide spectrum of professional fields which CC alumni represent, the CC Alumni Association will work on strengthening the concept of volunteerism in Tajikistan.



## A Virtual Art Exhibition



On July 2, 2009 the Association of Fulbright Alumni and Informational Center on Human Rights organized a virtual art exhibition at the American Corner in Dushanbe. The exhibition was dedicated to Independence Day of the U.S. Alla Aslitdinova, Director of Scientific Library of Academy of Science and Fulbright alumna 2004-2005, made a presentation about American history and the Memorial Day Holiday. The students were very interested and asked many questions. Fulbright alumni also made presentations about USG educational exchange programs and encourage students to participate in those programs.

## “Together We Care” Debate Tournament in Almaty

From June 24-26 Malika Khakimova '04, Farangis Nozimzoda '07 and Kadamsho Usufbekov '05 participated in the “Together We Care” project organized by Kazakhstan FLEX alumni in Almaty. The purpose of the project was to strengthen relationships between the alumni community of the participant countries and together solve problems of financial world crises and border related issues. These issues were topics of the debate tournament and round table discussion, which were held on the second day of event. Alumni plan to implement solutions offered though the round tables, discussion, and debate in their further work within their own communities.



## Embassy Hosts Day of Fun and Games for More Than 140 Orphans



Fifteen FLEX alumni volunteered to help the US Embassy host more than 140 children from the Tursun-Zade Orphanage for a full day of fun on May 10. Games and activities included football, basketball, swimming, and volleyball. The children also learned traditional American games such as hopscotch and "Slip N Slide," flew kites and made art projects. The event included a full lunch, which was partially sponsored by the Sega Fredo and Morning Star Cafes. A live band performed traditional Tajik music in the afternoon. The children brought their favorite toys back to the orphanage.

## International Children's Day Celebration With Orphans, Chkalovsk

On June 1, group of Khujand FLEX alumni together with initiative group "Our Kids" visited the orphanage in the city of Chkalovsk. The event was divided into three parts. The first part consisted of introducing alumni to orphans and their teachers. Alumni talked about the FLEX program and motivated children to study English and participate in the FLEX tests. After the introduction, children were divided into three groups to play different games. Alumni played basketball, tennis rockets, American football, and other American games with the children. American football was the most popular sport, because it was something new for them. FLEX alumnus Mukhtor Soliev '07 presented to the children his own football, which he brought from the U.S. as a memento from the FLEX community. By the end of the games, participants of the winning teams were awarded with presents. The second part of the event took place indoors. Alumni showed presentation about the environment and had a session with children about keeping the environment clean. Afterward the session alumni organized mini coffee-break for the children. The third part of the event consisted of a poetry reading contest in which all children participated. They read poems in Tajik, Russian, and English languages, and sang songs. At the end of the event, alumni distributed clothes, which they earlier collected through a clothing drive.



## Farewell Party for Anne Benjaminson, Cultural Affairs Officer



On June 5 FLEX Alumni organized a farewell party dedicated to Anne Benjaminson – US Embassy Cultural Affairs Officer. Anne worked as the Cultural Affairs Officer in Tajikistan for two years and during this time, established warm and close relationships with FLEX alumni. For her support of all FLEX alumni activities, a group of FLEX alumni made special preparations for the farewell meeting. They decorated the conference hall in the American Councils office, with a big colored

Poster, “We Will Miss You Anne.” During the meeting, the alumni wished her the best of luck in her further work, shared their thoughts, and their future plans. After two years of acquaintance, the alumni thanked Anne for her wonderful cooperation with FLEX alumni. In the end, alumni presented a memorable t-shirt and delicious cake, which alumni specially ordered for Anne. Ms. Benjaminson was amazed by the memorable t-shirt and sincerely thanked alumni for their work.

## “Smile” International Children’s Day Celebration with the Children from the Deaf School

For International Children’s Day, Farangis Nozimzoda ‘07 Zurab Dodkhudoev ‘07 and Abdulvakob Hofizi ‘09 visited the Global Connections and Exchange program students from school No.8 for the deaf children in Dushanbe, on June 2. Especially for this event alumni prepared variety of interesting activities, which were aimed to learn origami and develop personal skills. The event consisted of three parts: the first part included introduction, the second part consisted of making photo portieres from the magazines, and during the third part of the event children were learning origami – the traditional Japanese art of paper folding. Children found these activities interesting and were enthusiastic about implementing them. The event concluded with taking a lot of pictures.





## “Right To Happiness” Project with Disabled Children and Children With Poor Eyesight

Within the framework of the GYSD, FLEX alumni and Tajikistan Association of the Blind Children organized a sale exhibition of hand made objects, mosaics and paintings of the children with physical and mental disabilities and poor eyesight in Molodejniy theater on April 26. This event was supported by the U.S. Embassy, which provided financial aid to rent the theater. The rest of the money necessary for the posters, children's transportation, and small gifts for participants, had been previously raised by alumni. On the day of the event, Kadamsho Usufbekov ,05, Shoir Pulatova ,08, Zurab Dodkhudoev ,07 and Farangis Nozizmoda ,07 early in the morning, got together in the hall of Molodejniy theater to help decorators from „Formula Schastyia” – decoration agency who kindly consented to decorate the Exhibition and Concert halls for free.



The sale exhibition started at 10 a.m. FLEX alumni stayed near every table and answered questions of the visitors. After the exhibition, alumni performed a concert with the participation of the children with physical and mental disabilities and poor eyesight and what was a surprise – Tajik Pop Stars. For their performance, the Tajik Pop Stars did not charge the alumni any money.

The concert was led by two boys with poor eyesight. During the concert, talented children with disabilities sang songs, performed dances, and read poems. In the concert participated such Tajik Pop Stars as Takhmina Niyozava and dance band “West”. The children were very happy.

Over all, more than 150 school children, university students, foreigners from different NGO's and other individuals visited the exhibition and the concert. This event was highlighted on radio BBC Iran and newsletter “Jumhuriyat”.



## Grant Writing Seminar

On May 4, 2009 IREX Tajikistan organized a Grant Writing Seminar for the Alumni Small Grant Program (ASGP) and Project Smile (PS) at the Tahvid Hotel Conference Hall in Khujand. The seminar was attended by approximately 20 ECA alumni of programs including UGRAD, TEA, FLEX, and Global Connections and Exchange. Education Programs Division Program Coordinator Bakhtiyor Isoev facilitated the



seminar, which aimed to familiarize alumni with the basic principles of designing a project and writing successful grant applications for the upcoming October rounds of the Alumni Small Grant Program (ASGP) and Project Smile (PS).

Alumni learned how to better identify and approach potential donors, as well as general techniques for writing quality grant applications. Alumni also had a chance to share their past experiences applying to grant programs with other participants and discussed lessons learned in the areas of needs assessments, cost-sharing and in-kind contributions, sustainability and multiplier effect issues, budget and implementation feasibility, goal and objective development and many more. All attendees received certificates of achievement and IREX staff encouraged alumni to apply for upcoming rounds of ASGP and PS applications. At the end, everyone left the seminar with at least five project ideas and newly equipped grant writing skills.

## Public Speaking Skills Workshop



On May 27, 2009, IREX Tajikistan organized a Public Speaking Skills Training in the Dusti Amirkhon Business Restaurant's Conference Hall. The workshop was attended by approximately 20 ECA alumni living and studying in Sugd Region. These alumni include UGRAD, TEA, FLEX, and Global Connections alumni, as well as 2009-2010 Global UGRAD finalists. The workshop was conducted in English by IREX Tajikistan Education Programs Division Program Coordinator



Bakhtiyor Isoev. The goal of the workshop was to familiarize alumni with the basic principles of public speaking and equip them with the skills necessary to feel confident while speaking in front of people.

After few energizing and teambuilding activities, the first part of the workshop was dedicated to getting to know what communication, communication genres and the communication process are. Next, all attendees were instructed to come up with and generate words on flipcharts that make them think about public speaking. Having played the game, alumni presented their understanding of public speaking. The training continued with interactive games that helped equip participants with the necessary skills to be better public speakers, use and conduct PowerPoint presentations in a more productive manner. Afterwards, participants were split into three groups to come up with topics and make a short presentation about their idea. The workshop ended with IREX Tajikistan staff handing certificates of achievement all participants.

## UGRAD Alumna Masuda Sobitova Shares Her U.S. Experience



Ugrad alumna Masuda Sobitova visited the American Corner in Khujand and showed patrons a Power Point presentation of her stay in the United States researching English teaching curriculum development.

Sobitova inspired the students by sharing her incredible experience in the United States studying at Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa, her internship and cultural presentations, cooking Tajik food and traveling to other states. She introduced America to the audience in her presentation by sharing very beautiful photos, postcards, presents and souvenirs. After Sobitova's presentation the students were eager to learn more about the Ugrad program and asked lots of questions on how to get better prepared and apply for such programs. Sobitova responded to their questions, applying her considerable experience gained as a participant of the Ugrad program.



## UGRAD Alumna Organizes Three-Day Educational Training



UGRAD 2007-2008 alumna Mukhlisa Parpieva organized a three-day educational training for her university classmates at the student dorm of Khujand State University May 20<sup>th</sup> through May 22<sup>nd</sup>. The training allowed students to learn about US Education System and the Global UGRAD Program and its application process. On the second day participants has watched a movie in English and have discussed it afterwards in English. UGRAD alumni Mahfuza Sobitova (UGRAD 2007-2008) and Masuda Sobitova (UGRAD 2008-2009) provided their support in organizing these activities in Khujand. A third-year student participant commented: *"This training has been a good lesson for me and gave a lot of information about education system of the US and study opportunities abroad."*

### Let's Keep the World Clean

On May 29, 2009, over 40 US Government-sponsored alumni, including alumni of the Global UGRAD, FLEX, and TEA programs, as well as Global UGRAD finalists and other university students, volunteered at the "Let's Keep the World Clean" service event in Kayrakkum. The purpose of the event was to raise the awareness among alumni about environment protection and make alumni contribute by cleaning the lakeshore. The service was organized by IREX Tajikistan in the framework of the UGRAD and Muskie alumni programming with cooperation of Youth Group for Protection of the Environment (YGPE)..

*I was so glad I could participate in this training, I learned a lot. Moreover, I enjoyed the Movie Night, which was fun and informative. Thanks to the IREX for supporting the events which serve to provide students with very useful information".*

Mukhlisa noted in her report to IREX Tajikistan: *Actually, the Three-Day Educational Training was the best event I have ever conducted. It was the process of learning about opportunities, sharing ideas, finding out about the successful application that is; how to fill applications effectively and having fun by watching the "Bend it Like Beckham" movie. During these three days, I enjoyed answering students' questions about studying abroad and my own university experience in the US. Usually teachers are inspired by their students' active learning, and like a teacher I was so happy to see students' interests and active participation in all activities".*



## Join State Alumni: Your Global Community for alumni of State Department exchange programs

### Who are Alumni – Your Global Community!

Alumni are past participants of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs. With more than 1,000,000 alumni worldwide, State Alumni include world leaders, achievers, and influencers. Among this global community are 47 Nobel Laureates and over 300 chiefs of state or heads of government. They are politicians, CEOs, teachers, authors, artists, and most importantly, you! As an alumnus/a of a State Department-funded exchange program, you are part of a global community of the best and brightest. Build upon your exchange experience to advance your goals, your community, and our world.

### State Alumni: Opportunities and resources for you to connect with other alumni

- Hundreds of grant, job, and event postings
- Over 20,000 free titles in the online research center
- Access to apply for over \$33 billion in funding opportunities
- News about alumni projects; alumni success stories
- Participate in Q&A Live discussions with experts
- Share your reflections or research publications and join discussion forums
- Find fellow alumni to network with others in your field or your region
- Search for resumes or add your own to the global community

### Continue the exchange as alumni!

- Be active in your local alumni community
- Join State Alumni (<https://alumni.state.gov>) and the international social network “Exchanges Connect” <http://connect.state.gov/>
- Discover, meet, share, learn, grow, and achieve!

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## U.S. Embassy Dushanbe

Web: <http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov/>  
<http://russian.dushanbe.usembassy.gov/>

- Do you want to study in the United State?
- Want to learn more about these exchange programs at the U.S. Embassy ?

Sign up for the mailing list from the Public Diplomacy section of the U.S. Embassy Dushanbe to find out about these programs and more! Simply send a blank e-mail message to

[usembassydushanbeprograms-subscribe@yahooogroups.com](mailto:usembassydushanbeprograms-subscribe@yahooogroups.com)

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### *Educational Advising Center*

***American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS Dushanbe  
734003, 86 Tolstoy Street Tajikistan***

To subscribe to the Education USA Weekly Update on scholarships and fellowships distribution list please send your request to: [EducationUSA@americancouncils-tj.org](mailto:EducationUSA@americancouncils-tj.org)

## American Corners Tajikistan



American Corners are partnerships between the Public Affairs sections of United States Embassies and host institutions. They provide access to current and reliable information from and about the United States via book collections, the Internet, and through local programming to the general public overseas or abroad.

Sponsored jointly by a U.S. embassy and a host country organization, an American Corner serves as an information outpost similar to a public library. The multi-media, book and periodical collections are open and accessible. Where possible, associated reading or meeting rooms are made available to host program events and activities (i.e. author readings, speaker programs, films, workshops, meetings, and exhibits). The fundamental function of the American Corner is to make information about the United States available to foreign publics at large.

American Corner consists of a collection of books in English from and about the United States. The book collection may include reference titles, information products from the State Department Office of International Information Programs, works of fiction, business and government publications. English Language Learning materials. American Corners also provide access to U.S. information through access to the Internet, audio and video products, CDs, and CD-ROMS. The Corners are staffed by host institution personnel.

There are three American Corners currently functioning in Tajikistan in Dushanbe, Khujand, and Kulob and two more to be opened soon in Khorog and Qurghon-Teppa.

### American Corners Contact Information:

#### **Dushanbe American Corner**

Central Scientific Library  
Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan  
33 Rudaki Avenue  
Tel: (992) (37) 2275526  
E-mail: [acdushanbe@mail.ru](mailto:acdushanbe@mail.ru)

#### **Qurghon-Teppa American Corner**

Sworde-Teppa Center  
25 Vahdat Street  
Tel: (992) (3222) 29528  
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#### **Khujand American Corner**

Asiri Public Library  
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#### **Khorog American Corner**

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